THE IMPACT OF BUZZ MARKETING AND SERVICE QUALITY ON CONSUMER SATISFACTION: EXPLORING THE MODERATING ROLE OF CONSUMER CHARACTERISTICS

SHORT SYNOPSIS

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by

Praveen Kumar Pandey
21/Ph.D./121

Under the supervision of

Dr. Amandeep Daliwal
Associate Professor
School of Leadership & Management, MRIIRS

SCHOOL OF LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT
DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT -PG

MANAV RACHNA INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH & STUDIES

SECTOR-43, SURAJKUND –DELHI ROAD, FARIDABAD – 121004

SCHOOL OF LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

Certificate

I hereby declare that the short synopsis Title "**The Impact of Buzz Marketing and Service Quality on Consumer Satisfaction: Exploring the Moderating Role of Consumer Characteristics**" being submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Management under School of Leadership & Management of Manav Rachna International Institute of Research & Studies, Faridabad during the academic year 2022 – 23. It is a bonafide record of original work carried out under the supervision of Dr. Amandeep Dhaliwal, and has not been submitted in full or part to any other university or institute for degree or diploma. Further, it is certified that short synopsis is plagiarism free and proof has been submitted.

Praveen Kumar Pandey
21/Ph.D./121

Amandeep Dhaliwal
Signature of the Supervisor

Dr. Amandeep Dhaliwal, Associate Professor,
School of Leadership &Management, MRIIRS

Full name, designation and School

(Chairman, DRC)

(Director, CDP)

Abstract

Purpose: The present research endeavours to add to the existing corpus of knowledge by scrutinizing the influence of buzz marketing and service quality on percept ion and customer expectations further leading to customer satisfaction. The ultimate intent of this study is to construct and validate a theoretical framework that will serve as abasis for future inquiries on this subject matter, and better understanding the function of buzz marketing in shaping customer behaviour.

Design/Methodology/Approach: This empirical research would use a quantitative methodology approach to scrutinize the conceptual framework derived from the literature review. A Likert scale survey will be employed to amass data from the sample population. The study will utilize regression analysis and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to examine relationships and test the proposed conceptual framework.

Practical implications: This study's findings would hold significant practical implications for businesses and marketers seeking to enhance customer satisfaction. The study's examination of customer characteristics, service quality, perception, and buzz marketing's interaction highlight the importance of developing marketing campaigns that are tailored to specific customer groups. As a result, businesses can enhance customer expectations and perception, leading to increased customer loyalty and satisfaction.

Originality/Value: The present study would make a significant contribution to the existing literature by proposing a conceptual framework for investigating the effects of buzz marketing on customer expectations and perception. The research emphasizes the crucial role of customer perception and individual traits in determining customer satisfaction. As a result, it provides valuable insights for companies and marketers seeking to enhance their products and services and boost customer satisfaction via more efficient buzz marketing techniques.

Keywords: Buzz marketing, Customer Expectations, Customer Satisfaction, Consumer Characteristics, Service quality, and Perception.

JEL Classification : M3, M30, M31, L80, L81, L89.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The world of marketing is constantly evolving, with new trends and techniques continuously emerging. One trend that has gained notable traction in recent years is buzz marketing, also known as word-of-mouth marketing (Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008; Kamtarin, 2012). This type of marketing relies on informal networks and non-traditional channels to promote a product or service. It is premised on the notion that people place greater trust in recommendations from friends and family than traditional advertising (Meiners, Schwarting, & Seeberger, 2010). Consequently, businesses and marketers have been progressively turning to buzz marketing strategies to reach potential customers.

Despite the growing popularity of buzz marketing, its impact on customer perceptions and expectations remains an area of limited understanding (Putri, 2022; Carl, 2006; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1975; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). This study aims to address this gap by rigorously examining the relationship between buzz marketing and customer expectations, and its subsequent impact on service quality and satisfaction. Specifically, the study will explore the complex interplay between buzz marketing and customer expectations, the resulting influence of these expectations on perceived service quality, the link between perception of service quality and satisfaction, and the ultimate impact on customer satisfaction (Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler, 2006). Through meticulous analysis, this study seeks to provide novel insights into the existing literature on the influence of buzz marketing on satisfaction (Reinartz & Haenlein, 2011).

Consumer traits may impact how individuals respond to marketing efforts. Understanding how buzz marketing shapes opinions about a product (Bughin, Doogan, & Vetvik, 2010), how it influences purchasing intentions based on product sentiments (Chiu, Wang, Fang, & Huang, 2010), and how customer characteristics moderate the buzz marketing-perception association (Mortazavi, Esfidani, & Barzoki, 2014) can inform data-driven decisions about optimal buzz marketing strategies (Poturak, & Softic, 2019; Mauri, & Minazzi, 2013; Chakraborty, 2019).

Additionally, this research aims to develop and test a conceptual framework to guide future research on this topic. By creating a framework elucidating the relationships between

customer perception, buzz marketing and expectations (Huang & Chen, 2021; Shamma & Hassan, 2011; Zeithaml et al., 1996), this study will advance understanding in this domain.

The findings of this research have practical implications for businesses employing buzz marketing strategies. Elucidating the link between buzz marketing and expectations can help craft more effective campaigns targeting relevant audiences and converting potential into actual customers. Scrutinizing the association between service quality and perception can empower data-driven decisions to optimize products, services and satisfaction.

This study thoroughly examines buzz marketing's influence on perception, expectations, satisfaction, and service quality. The research design encompasses multiple aims, including investigating the effect of expectations on service quality, exploring the perception-service quality relationship, analyzing the impact of perception on satisfaction, and assessing the moderating role of consumer characteristics (Huang & Chen, 2021; Shamma & Hassan, 2011; Zeithaml et al., 1996). The findings can provide actionable insights for enhancing buzz marketing strategies. Additionally, the proposed conceptual framework advances buzz marketing research (East et al., 2018; Vranica, 2017). Overall, this study has salient implications for both academics and practitioners in marketing.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

2.1 The Effect of Buzz Marketing on Customer Expectations and Perception of the Customer:

Buzz marketing, also known as word-of-mouth marketing, refers to a marketing strategy that creates interest and hype in a product or service through informal communication among consumers (Cheung, Lee, & Rabjohn, 2008; Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008). Buzz marketing is a well-established marketing tactic that has been extensively researched in the literature. Aforementioned studies have primarily engrossed on examining the influence of buzz marketing on customer perception and expectations. For instance, Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) conducted a study to investigate the effect of buzz marketing on customer expectations and perception, while Dahlén, Granlund, and Grenros (2009) examined the influence of buzz marketing on customer perception. These studies have offered significant insights into the effectiveness of buzz marketing strategies and their impact on customer behaviour. However, there is still a need for further research to comprehensively understand the complex relationship between buzz marketing, customer perception, and behaviour. The study found that buzz marketing can create excitement and anticipation among customers, leading to increased expectations about the product or service (Mukherjee, Smith, & Burton, 2021). The study also showed that buzz marketing can influence how customers perceive the brand, making it more desirable and prestigious in their eyes (Hewett, et. al., 2016; Wu, & Yang, 2022).

Similarly, Lee and Youn (2009) found that buzz marketing can positively affect customer perception of a brand, resulting in increased brand loyalty. The study showed that buzz marketing can increase customers' perceptions of the brand's uniqueness, quality, and value, which can ultimately lead to increased customer satisfaction (Chakraborty, 2019).

Notwithstanding the popularity of buzz marketing in contemporary marketing practices, some researchers have questioned its effectiveness in enhancing customer expectations and perception. In recent years, empirical investigations have been undertaken to explore the impact of buzz marketing on customer expectations and perception. Duarte, e Silva, and Ferreira (2018) reported that buzz marketing has been shown to have significant effects on

these variables. Specifically, Brown, Treviño, and Harrison (2005) conducted a study aimed at assessing the impact of buzz marketing on customer expectations and perception. The study's findings revealed that buzz marketing can create unrealistic expectations among customers, which can lead to disappointment and dissatisfaction with the product or service. Furthermore, the study established that buzz marketing can also generate negative perceptions of the brand if the product or service fails to meet customers' expectations (Karniouchina, 2011).

These findings suggest that while buzz marketing can be an effective strategy for generating interest in a product or service, it must be used carefully to avoid creating unrealistic expectations and negative perceptions. The extant literature proffers that buzz marketing engenders dualistic impacts on customer expectations and perception. While buzz marketing potentially kindles customer excitement and anticipation and thus engenders positive brand perception, it can also foster unrealistic expectations which can ultimately impair brand perception, particularly if the product or service fails to meet customers' expectations.

2.2 The Effect of Customer Expectations on Service Quality:

Expectations of customer are essential in assessing quality of services in a business. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) categorize customer expectations into two types: desired expectations and adequate expectations. Desired expectations relate to customers' hopes for service delivery, while adequate expectations concern customers' belief about what they should receive. Meeting or exceeding these expectations is necessary to achieve high service quality. Accordingly, managing customer expectations is crucial for businesses seeking to maintain a loyal customer base and sustain long-term profitability.

Empirical research has established a direct association between customer expectations and service quality. Spreng and Mackoy (1996) emphasized that meeting customer expectations is paramount in achieving high service-quality and customer-satisfaction. Furthermore, surpassing customer expectations can engender enhanced loyalty of customer and favourable word-of-mouth communication. These empirical results lend support to the notion that meeting customer expectations is an integral facet of service quality, and businesses that can exceed such expectations are more likely to reap the benefits of a loyal customer base and positive brand reputation.

Cronin and Taylor (1992) postulated that service quality is determined by the divergence between customer expectations and actual service delivery. It is therefore imperative for businesses to discern and surpass their patrons' expectations to provide superior service. This investigation accentuates the significance of comprehending customer expectations in recognizing and resolving service gaps, thereby guaranteeing a satisfactory customer experience (Cronin & Taylor, 1992).

The Zone of Tolerance, a concept proposed by Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman (1993), has been recognized as an essential tool for understanding the complex relationship between service quality and customer expectations. The Zone-of-Tolerance provides a assortment of acceptable service quality that a customer can tolerate before becoming dissatisfied. This model has proven useful for practitioners in various service industries, as it enables them to set realistic targets for service quality and ensure that customer expectations are met or exceeded. As such, the Zone of Tolerance is a valuable tool for enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty. To ensure high service quality, businesses must grasp their customers' Zone of Tolerance and deliver service that falls within this range. This research underscores the necessity for businesses to monitor and regulate customer expectations to deliver a favorable customer experience (Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1993).

2.3 Effect of Service Quality on the Perception of the Customer

The topic of service quality has been extensively studied in the field of marketing, as it has a significant impact on customer satisfaction and loyalty. Researchers have recognized the importance of service quality in shaping customers' perceptions of a business, which in turn influences their likelihood to return or recommend the business to others. Uzir et al. (2021) emphasize the substantial influence of service quality on customer perceptions. In this research, we will explore the relationship between service quality and customer perception, and analyze its implications for businesses.

In their seminal work, Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) proposed a model of service quality that encompasses two key dimensions: technical quality and functional quality. Technical quality refers to the outcome of the service, including factors such as efficiency, consistency, and accuracy. On the other hand, functional quality relates to the process of service delivery, encompassing aspects such as friendliness, promptness, and understanding exhibited by the service provider. According to Parasuraman et al. (1985), customers' perception of service quality is influenced by these two essential dimensions. Both

dimensions are critical in shaping customers' evaluation of service quality, and therefore, they should be considered when assessing service quality.

This scholarly exposition elucidates the critical role of service quality in shaping customers' perceptions of a business. Empirical evidence suggests that service-quality has a unswerving impact on customers' experiences and satisfaction with a business (Roy, Sreejesh, & Bhatia, 2019; Uzir, et al., 2021). Furthermore, high-quality service can foster customer loyalty, thereby augmenting a business's profitability (Mainardes, Rosa, & Nossa, 2020). Conversely, poor service quality can trigger customer attrition, precipitating severe reputational harm to the business (Naeem, 2019). This underlines the importance of prioritizing service quality as a strategic imperative for firms seeking sustainable competitive advantage.

In contemporary business practices, customers' evaluation of service quality is fundamentally anchored in their expectations, and a notable gap between their actual service provided and expectations that can significantly affect their perception of the business (Muniz, et. al., 2019). Furthermore, empirical studies by Hallowell (1996) and Özkan, et. al., (2020) reveal that customers' perception of service quality hinges largely on their expectations, and such perception is strongly influenced by the gap between their actual service provided and expectations. Thus, it becomes imperative for businesses to cautiously manage customer expectations and deliver service that is of high quality, surpassing customer expectations wherever possible.

Brady and Cronin Jr. (2001) have identified five dimensions that significantly impact customers' perception of a business in terms of service quality: reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy, and responsiveness. Reliability refers to the service provider's ability to deliver the promised service and meet customer expectations (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988). On the other hand, assurance relates to the trust and confidence customers have in the service provider's capability to deliver the service (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Tangibles encompass the physical aspects of the service, including the facilities, equipment, and appearance of the service provider (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Empathy refers to the service provider's capacity to understand and fulfill the customer's needs and expectations (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Lastly, responsiveness pertains to the service provider's willingness and promptness in providing service and addressing customer concerns (Parasuraman et al., 1988). To achieve high levels of customer satisfaction and loyalty, businesses must acknowledge and fulfill these five dimensions of service quality.

Customer experience is a critical determinant of service quality and business success. Meeting or exceeding customer expectations through high-quality service can foster customer-satisfaction, loyalty, and 'positive word-of-mouth communiqué'. To achieve this, businesses must prioritize understanding their customers' expectations and excel in the five dimensions of service quality: reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy, and responsiveness. By doing so, businesses can provide a positive customer experience that enhances the customer's perception of the business and leads to business success (Chen McCain, et. al., 2022; Serra-Cantallops, Ramon Cardona, & Salvi, 2020).

Numerous research studies highlight the crucial significance of service quality in shaping customers' perception of a business. The evaluation of service quality by customers is based on both technical and functional aspects, which are influenced by their expectations and the disparity between the service provided and their expectations. In order to deliver exceptional service quality, businesses must excel in five key areas: assurance, tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, and empathy. By providing high-quality service, businesses can foster a positive customer experience, cultivate customer loyalty, and generate favorable word-of-mouth recommendations, thereby ensuring long-term success (Chen McCain, et al., 2022; Serra-Cantallops, Ramon Cardona, & Salvi, 2020; Brady & Cronin Jr, 2001; Spreng & Mackoy, 1996; Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1993; Cronin & Taylor, 1992).

2.4 Effect of Perception of the Customer on Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is an indispensable constituent for any enterprise, as it has a direct influence on its profitability and triumph. Scholars suggest that customer-satisfaction is a function of their opportunities of expectations and perception of the services received (Tuncer et al., 2021). Therefore, it is crucial for businesses to prioritize customers' perception to ensure their satisfaction.

The present study elucidates the notion of customer perception, denoting the customer's cognitive interpretation of the services offered by a business. This construct is shaped by multifarious antecedents, including the customer's previous interactions with the business, their expectations, their individual preferences, and the conduct of the employees of the firm (Özkan, et. al., s2020).

The contemporary research contributes to the existing body of literature on customer satisfaction by emphasizing the significance of expectations and perceived service quality.

Oliver's (1980) influential work underscores the importance of this association, which has been further supported by subsequent studies (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Cronin and Taylor, 1992). It is widely acknowledged that comprehending and managing customer expectations is crucial in attaining high levels of satisfaction (Zeithaml et al., 1990; Anderson et al., 1994). Consequently, organizations should prioritize delivering quality services that not only meet but also surpass customers' expectations in order to enhance their satisfaction and loyalty. According to Kusumawati and Rahayu (2020), when customers' perceptions exceed their expectations, they tend to experience satisfaction. Conversely, if their perceptions fall short of their expectations, they are likely to feel dissatisfied, as noted by Oliver (1980) and Park, Lee, and Nicolau (2020). Therefore, businesses must comprehend their customers' expectations and make efforts to meet or exceed them in order to ensure customer satisfaction.

Parasuraman et al.'s (1985) groundbreaking study demonstrated that the perception of service quality plays a crucial role in determining customer satisfaction. Even if their expectations are met, customers can still experience dissatisfaction if they perceive the quality of the service to be low (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Oliver, 1993). This significant finding has been replicated in various industries, such as healthcare (Tang et al., 2014), banking (Sureshchandar et al., 2002), and e-commerce (Wang & Lo, 2002). Consequently, it is imperative for firms to prioritize the enhancement of service quality in order to meet customer expectations and cultivate satisfaction (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003). Therefore, comprehending customer perceptions and delivering high-quality service are essential for achieving long-term success (Gounaris, Koritos, & Vassilikopoulou, 2010). Spreng and Mackoy (1996) further discovered that customer perception of service quality directly influences both satisfaction and loyalty. When customers perceive the quality of service to be high, it leads to satisfaction and loyalty, highlighting the importance of providing superior service to foster enduring customer relationships.

Consequently, it is incumbent upon businesses to diligently apprehend their patrons' subjective evaluations of their service and bridge any disjuncture between their expectations and perceptibility of the quality of service (Uzir, at. al., 2021). To this end, soliciting customer feedback through diverse avenues such as surveys, customer reviews, and social media can facilitate businesses in detecting areas for improvement and implementing changes to enhance their service quality (Prayag, et. al., 2020).

The research by Kim, Yin, and Lee (2020) revealed that businesses can augment their customers' perception of their service by imparting extensive training to their employees to deliver exceptional customer service. Given that employees significantly influence customers' perceptions of the business, it is vital to equip them with appropriate training and resources to provide exceptional service. This training should encompass handling difficult customers, proficient communication, and empathy towards customers' needs. By investing in employee training, businesses can foster positive customer experience, leading to customer satisfaction and loyalty.

The culmination of a customer's experience profoundly influences their satisfaction with a business. Thus, enterprises must strive to comprehend their patrons' perceptions of the services provided and reconcile the gap between their expectations' and the perceived-quality of service. By adopting this approach, enterprises can boost customer satisfaction and loyalty, leading to enhanced financial performance and overall success (Parasuraman et al., 1985). This highlights the significance of customer experience in today's business landscape, where firms must prioritize understanding their clientele's perspectives to thrive.

2.5 Moderating Effect of Consumer Characteristics

The utilization of Buzz marketing as a marketing strategy has become increasingly popular due to its ability to generate word-of-mouth communication through social media, viral videos, and other means. However, the impact of Buzz marketing on customers' expectations and perception of a service is dependent on several consumer characteristics that can moderate this relationship. Hence, a systematic vicarious of these factors is necessary to effectively utilize Buzz marketing as a marketing tool (Jin & Ryu, 2019).

Consumer characteristics, such as involvement, prior knowledge, and personal preferences, are vital in moderating the link between Buzz marketing and customer expectations and perception. Trusov, Bucklin, & Pauwels (2009) demonstrated that the level of customer engrossment moderates the nexus between Buzz marketing and perception of a service. High involvement customers are more susceptible to the influence of Buzz marketing than low involvement customers, emphasizing the need for firms to consider customer engrossment levels when deploying Buzz marketing strategies (Trusov, Bucklin, & Pauwels, 2009). These findings highlight the significance of understanding customer characteristics in the design of effective Buzz marketing campaigns.

The findings of Gensler et al. (2013) suggest that the 'Buzz-Marketing' effectiveness in shaping customer expectations is influenced by the level of customer prior knowledge. The study showed that customers with high prior knowledge are less susceptible to Buzz marketing compared to those with low prior knowledge. Therefore, businesses must take into account the level of customer prior knowledge when implementing Buzz marketing strategies to ensure they are effective in shaping customer expectations and perception. Failure to do so may result in lower levels of customer engagement and satisfaction.

In addition to prior knowledge, other consumer characteristics can moderate the relationship between Buzz marketing and customer expectations and perception. These include personal preferences, cultural background, and demographic factors such as gender, age and income (Haj Khalifa, 2022). For example, customers with specific personal preferences may be more or less likely to be influenced by Buzz marketing , depending on the nature of the marketing message (Ki & Kim, 2019). Similarly, customers from different cultural backgrounds may have different expectations and perceptions of the service, which can be influenced by Buzz marketing (Barreto, 2014). Therefore, businesses must carefully consider their target audience and tailor their Buzz marketing strategies accordingly to effectively influence customer expectations and perception.

In conclusion, the relationship between Buzz marketing and customer expectations and perception can be moderated by various consumer characteristics. Businesses must take into account the moderating effect of consumer characteristics on Buzz marketing to ensure that their strategies are effective and well-targeted. By understanding how personal preferences, cultural background, demographic factors, and prior knowledge can moderate the relationship between Buzz marketing and customer expectations and perception, businesses can develop more effective marketing tactics that resonate with their target spectators. This can lead to increased customer satisfaction and loyalty, ultimately contributing to the long-term success of the business (Haj Khalifa, 2022; Ki & Kim, 2019; Barreto, 2014; Gensler et al., 2013).

2.6 Gap Analysis

The field of buzz marketing, also known as word-of-mouth marketing, has gained significant attention in recent years as more businesses and marketers turn to this strategy to reach potential customers. The study aims to examine the mediating role of customer expectations in the relationship between buzz marketing and customer satisfaction.

2.6.1 Industry Perspective Gap

The industry-based research gap that this study aims to address is the lack of understanding on how to effectively utilize buzz marketing strategies to influence consumer customer expectations and perception. Despite the growing popularity of buzz marketing, businesses and marketers still face challenges in understanding how to effectively leverage this strategy to reach potential customers. Through a meticulous analysis of the data, this study will provide novel insights into the complex interplay between customer expectations, buzz marketing, service quality, perception and customer satisfaction.

2.6.2 Scholarly Gap

Previous research has primarily focused on the relationship between buzz marketing and customer expectations, or the impact of buzz marketing on perception in general (Putri, 2022; Carl, 2006; Ajzen, & Fishbein, 1975; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). However, there is limited research on how individual characteristics, such as age, gender, income, or personality traits, may influence the effectiveness of buzz marketing strategies (Stocchi, Pourazad, Michaelidou, Tanusondjaja, & Harrigan, 2021). Understanding how customer traits impact the association between buzz marketing and customer satisfaction is crucial for businesses and marketers looking to develop effective buzz marketing campaigns (Fard, & Marvi, 2019).

The present investigation emphasizes the necessity for additional research regarding the interaction among service-quality, perception, and satisfaction within the realm of buzz marketing. While prior studies have delved into the correlation between customer satisfaction and buzz marketing (Yoo & Donthu, 2001), as well as customer satisfaction and service quality (Cronin & Taylor, 1994), only a limited number of studies have explored the interplay of these factors on consumer behavior (Leung, Chang, Cheung, & Shi, 2022). Moreover, the connection between customer perception and buzz marketing remains insufficiently examined. Consequently, a more comprehensive comprehension of the intricate relationship between buzz marketing, perception, service-quality, and customer-satisfaction is imperative.

To advance our understanding of buzz marketing, future research should explore how customer traits can influence the connection between buzz marketing and customer expectations and perception of the customer. Moreover, investigating the interplay between buzz marketing, perception, and satisfaction of the customer is crucial to comprehending the stimulus of buzz marketing on customer expectations and perception of the customer. Such studies will provide valuable insights to businesses and marketers seeking to leverage buzz

marketing strategies effectively. These research gaps have been identified in previous studies by Hoyer, MacInnis, & Pieters (2012), Yoo & Donthu (2001), Cronin & Taylor (1994), and Zeithaml (1988).

2.7 Conceptual Framework

The present study seeks to address the lack of a comprehensive conceptual framework for investigating the relationship between buzz marketing, perception and customer expectations. This study endeavors to establish a theoretical foundation for future research in the domain by crafting and examining a conceptual framework. Drawing on extant literature, the framework intends to discern essential constructs and variables that potentially shape the correlation among buzz marketing, customer expectations, and perception. Empirical validation of the framework will facilitate a profound comprehension of the intricate interplay of these variables, offering actionable insights for firms aspiring to execute efficacious buzz marketing tactics.

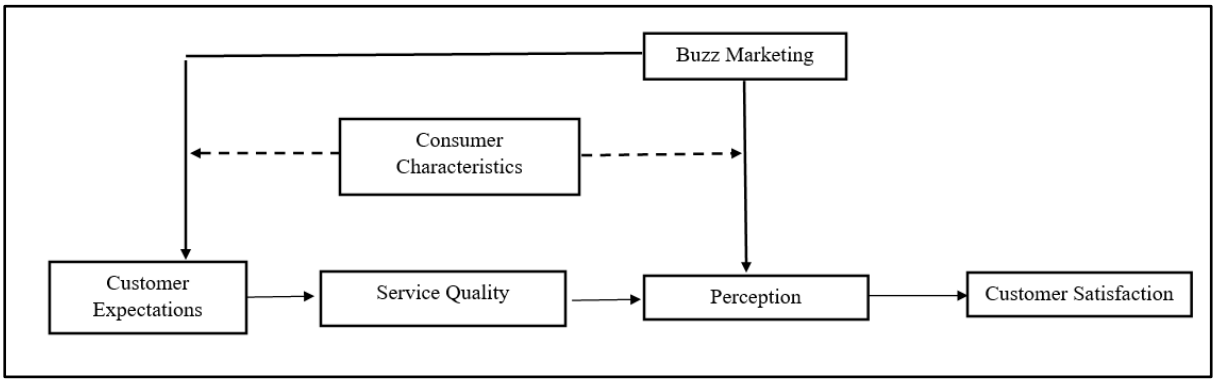

Figure 1: Conceptual Model

Source - Self

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study engages a cross-sectional, quantitative-research design. This design will allow for the examination of the relationships between buzz marketing, customer expectations and perception at a specific point in time.

3.2 Objectives of the study

1. To investigate the effect of buzz marketing on customer expectations and perception of the customer.
2. To examine the effect of customer expectations on the service quality.
3. To examine the effect of service quality on the perception of the customer.
4. To examine the effect of perception of the customer on the customer satisfaction.
5. To examine the moderating effect of consumer characteristics on the relationship of Buzz marketing with customer expectations and perception of the customer.
6. To formulate and test a conceptual framework for further studies on the relationship between buzz marketing, service quality, and customer satisfaction.

3.3 Sample and Data Collection

In terms of sampling technique, a stratified random sampling method will be used to ensure representation across different age groups. This will improve the generalizability of the findings to the larger population. Data will be collected through an online survey, allowing for easy data collection and analysis. Overall, these methodological choices will enable a robust examination of the effectiveness of buzz marketing in the target population. Based on Cochran's formula, the minimum sample size needed for this study is 384, given that the population size is unknown. This was calculated with a 95% confidence level and a margin of error of 0.05. As this sample size does not require the correction formula, it is considered adequate for the study (Cochran, 1977).

3.4 Data Analysis

The data presented here will be subjected to both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses, including correlation and multiple regression analysis. The present study endeavours to explore the intricate interplay between buzz marketing and customer expectations, as well as the complex association between customer expectations and perception. The present study seeks to contribute to the existing literature on buzz marketing by reconnoitring the moderating role of customer traits on the relationship between buzz marketing and perception. Furthermore, this study aims to investigate the link between service quality and perception, and to examine the influence of buzz marketing and perception on customer satisfaction. Lastly, the study aims to scrutinize the moderating effect of perception and buzz marketing on the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction. Furthermore, a conceptual framework will be created and verified using structural equation modeling (SEM) to aid future research on the connection between buzz marketing, customer expectations, and perception.

3.5 Validity and Reliability

In order to enhance the credibility and robustness of this research, a preliminary test will be carried out using a sample size that is demographically similar to the target population. This pilot test will assess the clarity and comprehensibility of the survey questions, as well as the appropriateness of the response options. Subsequently, necessary revisions will be made to the survey instrument to improve the accuracy and relevance of the questions. To ensure the reliability and validity of the survey instrument, the calculation of Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach, 1951) will be employed. This widely accepted measure evaluates the internal consistency reliability, which examines the extent to which the survey items measure the same underlying construct. A high value of Cronbach's alpha indicates that the survey instrument exhibits good internal consistency and reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Additionally, a pilot test will be conducted to establish the consistency and dependability of the survey instrument, thereby ensuring the validity and reliability of the collected data (Clark & Watson, 1995).

Chapter 4

Expected Outcome and Conclusion of the Study

The present study aims to provide a comprehensive examination of the effects of buzz marketing on customer expectations and perception, which is a gap in the literature. The research seeks to explore the correlation between buzz marketing and customer expectation (Keller, 2007), the relationship between customer expectations and perception (Oliver, 2014), and the influence of customer characteristics, such as age and gender, on the impact of buzz marketing on purchasing intentions (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study to investigate these relationships using a large-scale, multi-method approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data.

In addition to investigating the effects of buzz marketing on customer expectations and perception, this study will also examine the association between service quality and perception (Parasuraman et al., 1988), the impact of perception and buzz marketing on customer satisfaction (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004), as well as the moderating effect of perception and buzz marketing on the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction (Cronin & Taylor, 1992). The findings will contribute to the development of effective buzz marketing strategies by understanding the impact of customer characteristics and service quality on customer expectations and perception. Moreover, the study will provide insights into how buzz marketing shapes the perception of a product or service and how it impacts customer satisfaction, thereby assisting businesses and marketers in making informed decisions.

The marketing landscape has undergone significant changes in the past few years, with businesses exploring new and innovative ways to attract and retain customers. Buzz marketing has emerged as an effective marketing technique that uses word-of-mouth communication to generate interest in a product or service. This study addresses the need for a comprehensive conceptual framework to guide future research on the influence of buzz marketing on customer expectations and perception (Fernández-Moya et al., 2021; Hutter & Hoffmann, 2011; Wirtz et al., 2010). The study proposes a framework that incorporates the role of word-of-mouth communication in buzz marketing, drawing on established theories. Structural equation modeling was used to test the framework, highlighting the importance of

managing customer expectations through buzz marketing communication (Bhattacherjee, 2001; Oliver, 1980; Berger & Milkman, 2012).

Through a thorough literature review, we have highlighted the noteworthy impact of buzz marketing on perception and customer expectations. However, the effectiveness of buzz marketing can be influenced by several customer traits, such as age, gender, income, or personality traits. Understanding these customer traits is essential to developing effective buzz marketing campaigns that target the right audiences. Customer perception has been identified as a crucial factor in determining customer satisfaction, as it represents the perceived benefits relative to the cost of a product or service (Bolton & Drew, 1991; Zeithaml, 1988).

This study will employ a quantitative research design to examine the influence of buzz marketing on customer expectations and perception, and analyse the connections between customer expectations, service quality, perception, and satisfaction (Paraskevas & Katsouris, 2013; Saunders et al., 2018). A survey questionnaire will be administered to a sample of customers who have been exposed to buzz marketing campaigns. The survey questionnaire will comprise questions related to customer expectations, service quality, perception, satisfaction, and their interaction with buzz marketing. Data collected from the survey will be analysed using SEM to test the conceptual framework developed in this research.

The study is expected to contribute to the advancement of our understanding of buzz marketing and its impact on customer expectations and customer perception. The current study presents a robust conceptual framework that could serve as a basis for future research on the relationship between buzz marketing and customer behaviour. This study builds upon prior research that has established a positive correlation between buzz marketing and customer engagement The discoveries of this study will contribute to the prevailing literature by providing valuable insights into the effectiveness of buzz marketing in improving customer satisfaction. This is particularly relevant for businesses and marketers who are seeking to enhance customer loyalty and retention By gaining a deeper understanding of the impact of customer traits, quality of service, perception, and their interaction with buzz marketing on customer expectations and perception, businesses can develop more effective marketing campaigns that target the right audiences.

In summary, this study aims to address the gap in the literature by developing and testing a conceptual framework for studying the impact of buzz marketing on customer behaviour. The

results of this research will enhance our understanding of buzz marketing's effects on customer expectations and perception, offering valuable insights for businesses and marketers seeking to enhance customer satisfaction by improving their products and services. The proposed framework emphasizes the importance of examining customer traits, service quality, perception, and their interaction with buzz marketing in shaping customer expectations and perception. Overall, this study aims to establish a foundation for future research in the field, and provide guidance for the development of more effective buzz marketing strategies (Laczniak & Murphy, 1993; Godes & Mayzlin, 2004; Cheema & Kaikati, 2010).

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